EN930: Nineteenth-Century Gothic

(Handbook 2018-19)

Overview:

Gothic is marked by uncertainties about power, law, class, gender, sexuality and religion, linked as they are to wider apprehension regarding political and religious revolutions of the period. Such revolution was perceived as leading to a new progressive, secular and enlightenment society, and yet this change carried with it a shadowy underside that materialised in Gothic literature as the supernatural and visionary. Imaginative excess, mental trauma, spiritual transgression, grotesque bodies, and tortured forms of desire are both housed in, and the catalysts for, the emerging spectral landscapes of some familiar, and some less familiar, British Gothic novels, tales in poetry and prose-form and dramas of the nineteenth century in conjunction with other artistic and cultural forms. Yet, as students on this module will explore, as much as the Gothic is about fears and anxieties, it is also a multifaceted, hybrid form that is characterised by its many adaptations, appropriations, and variations of its themes.

Tutor: Dr Jen Baker (J.Baker.5@warwick.ac.uk)

Office Hours: In **Term 1,** MA students can come by my office **(H521)** between 1-2pm on **Wednesdays**.
In **Term 2, Monday** 5-6pm in weeks 1,3,4,5. In week 2 it will be 2-3pm.

Seminars: Wednesday's 10 – 12pm (Room TBC)

Schedule Outline

Seminars begin w/c 3rd October. There is no reading week. Secondary reading is also required for each week, which is detailed further on in the handbook.

Week 1. What is Gothic?
A selection of primary cultural sources and secondary critical theories

Week 2. Gothic Play: Parody and Satire
Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey (1803/1818)

Week 3. The Anatomy of Terror
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)

Week 4. Adapting and Staging the Gothic
Edward Fitzball, "The Flying Dutchman, or, The Phantom Ship" (1826)

Week 5. Penny Bloods and Urban Horror
Sweeney Todd, or; the String of Pearls: A Romance (1846-7)

Week 6. Telling Tales - "Female Gothic" [all except Eliot provided]
Anne Bannerman, "The Perjured Nun" (1802)
Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson, "Priory of St. Clair; Or Spectre of the Murdered Nun."(1811)
Elizabeth Gaskell, "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852),
George Eliot, "The Lifted Veil"(1859)
Rhoda Broughton, "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth" (1868)
Mary E. Braddon, "At Chricton Abbey" (1871)
J.H. Riddell, "The Open Door" (1882)
B.M. Croker, "To Let" (1890)
Margaret Oliphant, "The Library Window" (1896)

Week 7. Dangerous Doubles
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)
Jekyll and Hyde dramatized (1887)

Week 8: Disease and Desire
Florence Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897)

Week 9: Imperial Invasion Gothic
H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

Week 10: Beyond the Bounds: Modern Adaptations
Henry James, "The Turn of the Screw" (1898) [c. pp.80]
John Harding, *Florence and Giles* (2010)

Summer Preparation

I strongly recommend acquainting yourself with more general introductions to various ideas about what "the Gothic" is (not just C19th, but as a genre, and theoretical mode), by looking at reading companions such as *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* edited by Jerrold E. Hogle or *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies,* edited by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend. You may wish to read OUP's *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* by Nick Groom but the library reading list for the module also shows a great wealth of other available readers (and there are many more not on that list!).

Week-by-Week Preparation

Every week you will have your primary text(s), accompanied by set or suggested secondary criticism. I also provide "guidance" for reading, based on the theme of the class. BUT, firstly, you should make notes of everything you think of as you read those texts that might relate to the Gothic, to themes, to ideas you have for world domination, for essays you could potentially right.

You will find this particularly useful when completing the **required weekly reading-log** that you need to submit to me via **your personalised google doc** by **7pm each Friday.**

- 500-700 words not on the text alone, but on **the class.** What did you learn about the text, the secondary reading, the context, the Gothic, from your own reading and the class-discussion. Hated something specific about the book? The ideas of that weird secondary critic? Did someone say something inspiring in discussion? Something you thought was absolute poppy-cock? Then tell me what you learnt in your reading log.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate a detailed and advanced knowledge about the historical contexts that gave rise to this particular literary and artistic genre;
2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of some of the key themes, topics, and debates that emerge in different kinds of gothic narratives produced in the long nineteenth century.
3. Engage in significant critical debates surrounding such issues as gender, political rights, the nature of the human, the relationship between mind and body, questions of scientific and ethical progress;
4. Demonstrate an advanced ability to analyse the literary, cultural, and artistic narratives of an earlier era to relate aesthetic concerns and modes of expression to its historical context;
5. Demonstrate an advanced ability to understand and analyse relevant theoretical ideas, and to apply these ideas to literary and visual texts.

Skills acquired

• Students will participate and sometimes lead seminar work and presentations, demonstrate advanced communication skills, and an ability to work both individually and in groups;
• Through essay-writing, demonstrate appropriate research and bibliographic skills, an advanced capacity to construct a coherent, substantiated argument, and a capacity to write clear and correct prose;
• Through research for seminars, essays, and presentations demonstrate advanced proficiency in information retrieval and analysis.

Week 1: What is Gothic?

As well as my general brief introduction to, and overview of, the course, in week one, we will be considering, as a group, the elusive nature of "Gothic" (and, indeed, whether it should be capitalised, and whether that even matters). **You need to do some preparatory work**:

1.a) Read the following **"primary sources"** (this is a bit of a contentious term…but let's go with it) to get a sense of how contemporary authors framed the character and functions of terror and horror, how critics of the nineteenth century received and criticised what we would call (broadly) "Gothic" literature and its readers.

- Anon. 'Terrorist Novel Writing' (1797) [reproduced below]
- Anon. "Novel-Reading: A Cause of Female Depravity" (1817) [reproduced below]
- Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826) https://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/On-the-Supernatural-in-Poetry.pdf
- Wilkie Collins, "The Unknown Public" (1858) [reproduced below]

1.b) **Get a sense of reception by reading the chapter "Literary Rubbish"** by Franz. J. Potter from *The History of Gothic Publishing, 1800–1835*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, (2005). https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9780230512726_1.pdf

2. Ensure to get some **sense of context** and – in particular the origins of Gothic literature – by reading and **making notes on** the early chapters, introductions, and overview chapters on Gothic origins found in Gothic companions such as**:

- *The Cambridge companion to gothic fiction* / ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (2002)
- *A New Companion to the Gothic* / ed.by David Punter (2012) [electronic resource]
- *Romantic gothic: an Edinburgh companion* / ed. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (2016) [electronic resource]
- See also texts such as *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* by Nick Groom, [electronic resource]

***Note I don't expect you to read all of these, nor limit yourself to these suggestions. But just one chapter would not be enough!*

3. Ensure to get some **sense of the key tropes and themes** and of the **critical concepts at play** in Gothic Studies. Keep track of who says what, in which text, arguments for and against. The following are suggested texts, but you should read beyond these:

- *Key Concepts in the Gothic* by William Hughes (2018) [electronic resource]
- *Gothic literature* (2014) / Andrew Smith [print and electronic resource]
- *Gothic* / Fred Botting (2014) [electronic resource]
- *Gothic: critical concepts in literary and cultural studies* / edited by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend [only print version available but there are 4 copies] (2004)
- *Gothic literature: a Gale critical companion* / foreword by Jerrold E. Hogle; Jessica Bomarito (2006) [electronic resource]

***Note, again, I don't expect you to read all of these, nor limit yourself to these suggestions. But just one chapter would not be enough!*

4. Using overviews and introductory chapters, start to have a read of how different critics characterise **early-nineteenth and Victorian Gothic** (but this is something we will be building on in more detail across the course, so concentrate on the previous three tasks if short of time).

TERRORIST NOVEL WRITING.

SIR,*

I NEVER complain of faſhion, when it is confined to externals—to the form of a cap, or the cut of a lapelle; to the colour of a wig, or the tune of a ballad; but when I perceive that there is ſuch a thing as faſhion even in compoſing books, it is, perhaps, full time that ſome attempt ſhould be made to recall writers to the old boundaries of common ſenſe.

I allude, Sir, principally to the great quantity of novels with which our circulating libraries are filled, and our parlour tables covered, in which it has been the faſhion to make *terror* the *order of the day*, by confining the heroes and heroines in old gloomy caſtles, full of ſpectres, apparitions, ghoſts, and dead men's bones. This is now ſo common, that a Noveliſt bluſhes to bring about a marriage by ordinary means,

* It is eaſy to ſee that the ſatire of this letter is particularly levelled at a literary lady of conſiderable talents, who has preſented the world with three novels, in which ſhe hat found out the ſecret of making us "fall in love with what we fear to look on."---The *ſyſtem of terror* which ſhe is adopted is not the only reproach to which ſhe is liable. Beſides, the tedious monotony of her deſcriptions, ſhe affects in the moſt diſguſting manner a knowledge of languages, countries, cuſtoms, and objects of art of which ſhe is lamentably ignorant. She ſuſpends *tripods* from the cieling by chains, not knowing that a *tripod* is a utenſil ſtanding upon three feet.---She covers the kingdom of Naples with India figs becauſe *St. Pierre* has introduced thoſe tropical plants in his tales, of which the ſcene is laid in India---and ſhe makes a convent of monks a neceſſary appendage to a monaſtery of nuns. This ſhews how well a lady underſtands the wants of her ſex. Whenever ſhe introduces an Italian word it is ſure to be a groſs violation of the language. Inſtead of making a nobleman's ſervant call him *Padrone*, or *Illuſtriſſimo*, ſhe makes him addreſs him by the title of *Maeſtro*, which is Italian for a teacher. She converts the ſingular of *Lazzaroni* into Lazzaro, &c. &c. &c.

This lady's huſband told a friend that he was going to Germany with his wife, the object of whoſe journey was to pick up materials for a novel. I think in that caſe anſwered his friend, that you had better let her go alone!

but

but conducts the happy pair through long and dangerous galleries, where the light burns blue, the thunder rattles, and the great window at the end preſents the hideous viſage of a *murdered* man, *uttering* piercing groans, and developing ſhocking myſteries. If a curtain is withdrawn, there is a bleeding body behind it; if a cheſt is opened, it contains a ſkeleton; if a noiſe is heard, ſomebody is receiving a deadly blow; and if a candle goes out, its place is ſure to be ſupplied by a flaſh of lightening. Cold hands graſp us in the dark, ſtatues are ſeen to move, and ſuits of armour walk off their pegs, while the wind whiſtles louder than one of Handel's choruſſes, and the ſtill air is more melancholy than the dead march in Saul.

Such are the dreſſes and decorations of a modern novel, which, as Bayes ſays, is calculated to "elevate and ſurpriſe;" but in doing ſo, carries the young reader's imagination into ſuch a confuſion of terrors, as muſt be hurtful. It is to great purpoſe, indeed, that we have forbidden our ſervants from telling the children ſtories of ghoſts and hobgoblins, if we cannot put a novel into their hands which is not filled with monſters of the imagination, more frightful than are to be found in Glanvil, the famous *bug-a-boo* of our fore fathers.

A novel, if at all uſeful, ought to be a repreſentation of human life and manners, with a view to direct the conduct in the important duties of life, and to correct its follies. But what inſtruction is to be reaped from the diſtorted ideas of lunatics, I am at a loſs to conceive. Are we come to ſuch a paſs, that the only commandment neceſſary to be repeated is, "Thou ſhalt do no murder?" Are the duties of life ſo changed, that all the inſtructions neceſſary for a young perſon is to learn to walk at night upon the battlements of an old caſtle, to creep hands and feet along a narrow paſſage, and meet the devil at the end of it? Is the corporeal frame of the female ſex ſo maſculine and hardy, that it muſt be ſoftened down by the touch of dead bodies,

dies, clay-cold hands, and damp ſweats? Can a young lady be taught nothing more neceſſary in life, than to ſleep in a dungeon with venemous reptiles, walk through a ward with aſſaſſins, and carry bloody daggers in their pockets, inſtead of pin-cuſhions and needle-books?

Every abſurdity has an end, and as I obſerve that almoſt all novels are of the terrific caſt, I hope the inſipid repetition of the ſame bugbears will at length work a cure. In the mean time, ſhould any of your female readers be deſirous of catching the ſeaſon of terrors, ſhe may compoſe two or three very pretty volumes from the following recipe:

Take—An old caſtle, half of it ruinous.
A long gallery, with a great many doors, ſome ſecret ones.
Three murdered bodies, quite freſh.
As many ſkeletons, in cheſts and preſſes.
An old woman hanging by the neck; with her throat cut.
Aſſaſſins and deſperadoes, *quant. ſuff.*
Noiſes, whiſpers, and groans, threeſcore at leaſt.
Mix them together, in the form of three volumes, to be taken at any of the watering places, before going to bed.

PROBATUM EST.

AMAZING FEAT.

TINTINNABULOUS INTREPIDITY,

OR

SCENES OF BELL-RINGING.

LAST week the Society of *Treaſury Youths* rang a peal of 6469 majors, bob-majors, and triple-bobs, conſiſting of the following changes:

I. Glory of Old England—exertions by ſea and land—glorious victories.

Exertions by ſea and land—glorious victories—and glory of Old England.

Glorious

Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797, London: R.Phillips, 1798. pp.223-5. © British Library Newspapers

La Belle assemble: or Court and fashionable magazine; May 1817; British Periodicals pg. 219-220

NOVEL-READING A CAUSE OF FEMALE DEPRAVITY.

"But woman no redemption knows;
"The wounds of honour never close!
"Pity may mourn but not restore,
"And woman falls to rise no more."

THOSE who first made novel-reading an indispensable branch in forming the minds of young women have a great deal to answer for. Without this poison instilled, as it were, into the blood, females in ordinary life would never have been so much the slaves of vice. The plain food, wholesome air, and exercise they enjoy, would have exempted them from the tyranny of lawless passion; and, like their virtuous grandmothers, they would have pointed the finger of shame at the impure and

licentious. But those generous sentiments, those liberal opinions, those tender tales abounding with fine feeling, soft ideas, fascinating gentleness, and warm descriptions, have been the ruin of them. A girl with her intellectual powers enervated by such a course of reading, falls an easy prey to the first boy who assumes the languishing lover. He has only to stuff a piece of dirty paper into the crevice of her window, full of *thous*, *thees*, and *thys*, and mellifluous compounds, hieroglyphically spelled, perhaps, and Miss is not long in finding out that "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:" so, as Master is yet in his apprenticeship, and friends would disapprove of an early marriage, they agree to dispense with the ceremony. Nay, even when brooding over a helpless base-born infant, and surrounded by a once respectable and happy family, now dejected and dishonoured, too often does the infatuated fair one take pleasure in the misery she has created, and fancy floods of sorrow *sweetly graceful*, because, forsooth, she is in the same point of view as the hapless, the distressed, the love-lorn Sappho of some novel or other.

And yet this, bad as it is, is not the worst result of such pernicious reading. It is no uncommon thing for a young lady, who has attended her dearest friend to the altar a few months after a marriage which perhaps, but for her, had been a happy one, to fix her affections on her friend's husband, and by artful blandishments allure him to herself! Be not staggered, moral reader, at the recital; such serpents are really in existence; such dæmons in the form of women are now too often to be found! Three instances, in as many years, have occurred in the little circle I move in. I have seen two disconsolate parents drop into premature graves, miserable victims to their daughters' dishonour; and the peace of several relative families wounded, never to be healed again.

"And was novel-reading the cause of this?" inquires some gentle fair one, who, deprived of such an amusement, could hardly exist; "was novel-reading the foundation of such frail conduct?" I answer, yes! It is in that school the poor deluded female imbibes erroneous principles, and from thence pursues a flagrantly vicious line of conduct; it is there she is told that love is involuntary, and that attachments of the heart are decreed by fate. Impious reasoning! base infatuation! As if a Power infinitely wise and beneficent would ordain atrocity! The first idle prepossession, therefore, such a person feels, if it happen to be for the husband of her most intimate friend, instead of calling herself to a severe account for the illegal preference, she sets to work to reconcile it to nature.—"There is a fatality in it," argues she; "it is the will of Heaven our souls should be united in the silken bonds of reciprocal love, and there is no striving against it."—This once settled, criminality soon follows; the gentle, the sympathizing, the faithful friend undauntedly plants a dagger in the bosom of the mother, and ruthlessly tears from the innocent children the parent stem on which their support and comfort depend. And yet this very female has cried, oh, how she has cried! over relations of fictitious distress.

If good spirits in the other world are sensible of what is done in this, how will the Spartan and Roman dames of antiquity bless themselves that they were not doomed to breathe on earth in the nineteenth century! how will the cheeks of many a British matron be suffused with shame for her polluted descendants!

'The Unknown Public' by Wilkie Collins
Household Words, Volume XVIII, Magazine No. 439, 21 August 1858, Pages: 217-222

THE UNKNOWN PUBLIC.

Do the subscribers to this journal, the customers at the eminent publishing-houses, the members of book-clubs and circulating libraries, and the purchasers and borrowers of newspapers and reviews, compose altogether the great bulk of the reading public of England? There was a time when, if anybody had put this question to me, I, for one, should certainly have answered, Yes.

I know better now. I know that the public just now mentioned, viewed as an audience for literature, is nothing more than a minority.

This discovery (which I venture to consider equally new and surprising) dawned upon me gradually. I made my first approaches towards it, in walking about London, more especially in the second and third rate neighbourhoods. At such times, whenever I passed a small stationer's or small tobacconist's- shop, I became conscious, mechanically as it were, of certain publications which invariably occupied the windows. These publications all appeared to be of the same small quarto size; they seemed to consist merely of a few unbound pages; each one of them had a picture on the upper half of the front leaf, and a quantity of small print on the under. I noticed just as much as this, for some time, and no more. None of the gentlemen who are so good as to guide my taste in literary matters, had ever directed my attention towards these mysterious publications. My favourite Review is, as I firmly believe, at this very day, unconscious of their existence. My enterprising librarian who forces all sorts of books on my attention that I don't want to read, because he has bought whole editions of them a great bargain, has never yet tried me with the limp unbound picture quarto of the small shops. Day after day, and week after week, the mysterious publications haunted my walks, go where I might; and, still, I was too inconceivably careless to stop and notice them in detail. I left London and travelled about England. The neglected publications followed me. There they were in every town, large or small. I saw them in fruit-shops, in oyster-shops, in lollypop-shops. Villages even—picturesque, strong-smelling villages—were not free from them. Wherever the speculative daring of one man could open a shop, and the human appetites and necessities of his fellow mortals could keep it from shutting up again, there, as it appeared to me, the unbound picture quarto instantly entered, set itself up obtrusively in the window, and insisted on being looked at by everybody. "Buy me, borrow me, stare at me, steal me– do anything, O inattentive stranger, except contemptuously pass me by!"

Under this sort of compulsion, it was not long before I began to stop at shop-windows and look attentively at these all-pervading specimens of what was to me a new species of literary production. I made acquaintance with one of them among the deserts of West Cornwall, with another in a populous thoroughfare of Whitechapel, with a third in a dreary little lost town at the north of Scotland. I went into a lovely county of South Wales; the modest railway had not penetrated to it, but the audacious picture quarto had found it out. Who could resist this perpetual, this inevitable, this magnificently unlimited appeal to notice and patronage? From looking in at the windows of the shops, I got on to entering the shops themselves, to buying specimens of this locust-flight of small publications, to making strict examination of them from the first page to the last, and finally, to instituting inquiries about them in all sorts of well-informed quarters. The result—the astonishing result—has been the discovery of an Unknown Public; a public to be counted by millions; the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel Journals.* * It may be as well to explain that I use this awkward compound word in order to mark the distinction between a penny journal and a newspaper. The "journal" is what I am now writing about. The "newspaper" is an entirely different subject, with which this article has no connection.

I have five of these journals now before me, represented by one sample copy, bought haphazard, of each. There are many more; but these five represent the successful and well-established members of the literary family. The eldest of them is a stout lad of fifteen years standing. The youngest is an infant of three months old. All five are sold at the same price of one penny; all five are published regularly once a week; all five contain about the same quantity of matter.

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The weekly circulation of the most successful of the five, is now publicly advertised (and, as I am informed, without exaggeration) at half a Million. Taking the other four as attaining altogether to a circulation of another half million (which is probably much under the right estimate) we have a sale of a Million weekly for five penny journals. Reckoning only three readers to each copy sold, the result is *a public of three millions*—a public unknown to the literary world; unknown, as disciples, to the whole body of professed critics; unknown, as customers, at the great libraries and the great publishing-houses; unknown, as an audience, to the distinguished English writers of our own time. A reading public of three millions which lies right out of the pale of literary civilisation, is a phenomenon worth examining— a mystery which the sharpest man among us may not find it easy to solve.

In the first place, who are the three million—the Unknown Public– as I have ventured to call them ? The known reading public—the minority already referred to — are easily discovered and classified. There is the religious public, with booksellers and literature of its own, which includes reviews and newspapers as well as books. There is the public which reads for information, and devotes itself to Histories, Biographies, Essays, Treatises, Voyages and Travels. There is the public which reads for amusement, and patronises the Circulating Libraries and the railway book-stalls. There is, lastly, the public which reads nothing but newspapers. We all know where to lay our hands on the people who represent these various classes. We see the books they like on their tables. We meet them out at dinner, and hear them talk of their favourite authors. We know, if we are at all conversant with literary matters, even the very districts of London in which certain classes of people live who are to be depended upon beforehand as the picked readers for certain kinds of books. But what do we know of the enormous outlawed majority—of the lost literary tribes–of the prodigious, the overwhelming three millions? Absolutely nothing.

I, myself—and I say it to my sorrow— have a very large circle of acquaintance. Ever since I undertook the interesting task of exploring the Unknown Public, I have been trying to discover among my dear friends and my bitter enemies, both alike on my visiting list, a subscriber to a penny novel- journal—and I have never yet succeeded in the attempt. I have heard theories started as to the probable existence of penny novel- journals in kitchen dressers, in the back parlours of Easy Shaving Shops, in the greasy seclusion of the boxes at the small Chop Houses. But I have never yet met with any man, woman, or child who could answer the inquiry, "Do you subscribe to a penny journal?" plainly in the affirmative, and who could produce the periodical in question. I have learnt, years ago, to despair of ever meeting with a single woman, after a certain age, who has not had an offer of marriage. I have given up, long since, all idea of ever discovering a man who has himself seen a ghost, as distinguished from that other inevitable man who has had a bosom friend who has unquestionably seen one. These are two among many

Brought to you by
DJO: Dickens Journals Online (http://www.djo.org.uk)

other aspirations of a wasted life which I have definitely given up. I have now to add one more to the number of my vanished illusions.

In the absence, therefore, of any positive information on the subject, it is only possible to pursue the investigation which occupies these pages by accepting such negative evidence as may help us to guess with more or less accuracy, at the social position, the habits, the tastes, and the average intelligence of the Unknown Public. Arguing carefully by inference, we may hope, in this matter, to arrive, by a circuitous road, at something like a safe, if not a satisfactory, conclusion.

To begin with, it may be fairly assumed—seeing that the staple commodity of each one of the five journals before me, is composed of Stories—that the Unknown Public reads for its amusement more than for its information.

Judging by my own experience, I should be inclined to add, that the Unknown Public looks to quantity rather than quality in spending its penny a week on literature. In buying my five specimen copies, at five different shops, I purposely approached the individual behind the counter, on each occasion, in the character of a member of the Unknown Public—say, Number Three Million and One —who wished to be guided in laying out a penny entirely by the recommendation of the shopkeeper himself. I expected, by this course of proceeding, to hear a little popular criticism, and to get at what the conditions of success might be, in a branch of literature which was quite new to me. No such result, however, occurred in any case. The dialogue between buyer and seller always took some such practical turn as this:

Number Three Million and One.—"I want to take in one of the penny journals. Which do you recommend ?"

Enterprising Publisher.-- "Some likes one, and some likes another. They're all good pennorths. Seen this one?"

"Yes"

"Seen that one?"

"No"

"Look what a pennorth!"

"Yes– but about the stories in this one? Are they as good, now, as the stories in that one ?"

"Well, you see, some likes one, and some likes another. Sometimes I sells more of one, and sometimes I sells more of another. Take 'em all the year round, and there ain't a pin, as I knows of, to choose between 'em. There's just about as much in one as there is in

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another. All good pennorths. Why, Lord bless your soul, just take 'em up and look for yourself, and say if they ain't good pennorths! Look what a lot of print in every one of 'em! My eye! What a lot of print for the money!"

I never got any farther than this, try as I might. And yet, I found the shopkeepers, both men and women, ready enough to talk on other topics. On each occasion, so far from receiving any practical hints that I was interrupting business, I found myself sociably delayed in the shop, after I had made my purchase, as if I had been an old acquaintance. I got all sorts of curious information on all sorts of subjects,—excepting the good pennorth of print in my pocket. Does the reader know the singular facts in connection with Everton Toffey ? It is like Eau de Cologne. There is only one genuine receipt for making it, in the world. It has been a family inheritance from remote antiquity. You may go here, there, and everywhere, and buy what you think is Everton Toffey (or Eau de Cologne); but there is only one place in London, as there is only one place in Cologne, at which you can obtain the genuine article. That information was given me at one penny journal shop. At another, the proprietor explained his new system of Stay- making to me. He offered to provide my wife with something that would support her muscles and not pinch her flesh; and, what was more, he was not the man to ask for his bill, afterwards, except in the case of giving both of us perfect satisfaction. This man was so talkative and intelligent: he could tell me all about so many other things besides stays, that I took it for granted he could give me the information of which I stood in need. But here again I was disappointed. He had a perfect snow-drift of penny journals all over his counter—he snatched them up by handfuls, and gesticulated with them cheerfully; he smacked and patted them, and brushed them all up in a heap, to express to me that "the whole lot would be worked off by the evening;" but he, too, when I brought him to close quarters, only repeated the one inevitable form of words: "A good pennorth; that's where it is! Bless your soul, look at any one of them for yourself, and see what a pennorth it is!"

Having, inferentially, arrived at the two conclusions that the Unknown Public reads for amusement, and that it looks to quantity in its reading, rather than to quality, I might have found it difficult to proceed further towards the making of new discoveries, but for the existence of a very remarkable aid to inquiry, which is common to all the penny novel-journals alike. The peculiar facilities to which I now refer, are presented in the Answers to Correspondents. The page containing these is, beyond all comparison, the most interesting page in the penny journals. There is no earthly subject that it is possible to discuss, no private affair that it is possible to conceive, which the amazing Unknown Public will not confide to the Editor in the form of a question, and which the still more amazing editor will not set himself seriously and resolutely to answer. Hidden under cover of initials, or Christian names, or conventional signatures, such as Subscriber, Constant Reader, and so forth, the editor's correspondents seem, many of them, to judge by the published answers to their questions, utterly impervious to the senses of ridicule or shame. Young girls beset by perplexities which are usually supposed to be reserved for a mother's or an elder sister's ear only, consult the editor. Married women, who have committed little frailties consult the editor. Male jilts in deadly fear of actions for breach of promise of marriage, consult the editor. Ladies whose complexions are on the wane, and who wish to know the best artificial means of restoring them, consult the editor. Gentlemen who want to dye their hair, and get rid of their corns, consult the editor. Inconceivably dense ignorance, inconceivably petty malice, and inconceivably complacent vanity, all consult the editor, and all, wonderful to relate, get serious answers from him. No mortal position is too difficult for this wonderful man; there is no change of character as general referee, which he is not prepared to assume on the instant. Now he is a father, now a mother, now a schoolmaster, now a confessor, now a doctor, now a lawyer, now a young lady's confidante, now a young gentleman's bosom friend, now a lecturer on morals, and now an authority in cookery.

However, our present business is not with the editor, but with his readers. As a means of getting at the average intelligence of the Unknown Public,—as a means of testing the general amount of education which they have acquired, and of ascertaining what share of taste and delicacy they have inherited from Nature—these extraordinary Answers to Correspondents may fairly be produced in detail, to serve us for a guide. I must premise, that I have not maliciously hunted them up out of many numbers; I have merely looked into my five sample copies of five separate journals,—all, I repeat, bought, accidentally, just as they happened to catch my attention in the shop windows. I have not waited for bad specimens, or anxiously watched for good: I have impartially taken my chance. And now, just as impartially, I dip into one journal after another, on the Correspondents' page, exactly as the five happen to lie on my desk. The result is, that I have the pleasure of pre-

senting to those ladies and gentlemen who may honour me with their attention, the following members of the Unknown Public, who are in a condition to speak quite unreservedly for themselves.

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A reader of a penny novel-journal who wants a receipt for gingerbread. A reader who complains of fulness in his throat. Several readers who want cures for grey hair, for warts, for sores on the head, for nervousness, and for worms. Two readers who have trifled with Woman's Affections, and who want to know if Wornan can sue them for breach of promise of marriage. A reader who wants to know what the sacred initials I. H. S. mean, and how to get rid of small-pox marks. Another reader who desires to be informed what an esquire is. Another who cannot tell how to pronounce picturesque and acquiescence. Another who requires to be told that *chiar'oscuro* is a term used by painters. Three readers who want to know how to soften ivory, how to get a divorce, and how to make black varnish. A reader who is not certain what the word Poems means; not certain that Mazeppa was written by Lord Byron; not certain whether there are such things in the world as printed and published Lives of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Two afflicted readers, well worthy of a place by themselves, who want a receipt apiece for the cure of knock-knees; and who are referred (it is to be hoped, by a straight- legged editor) to a former answer, addressed to other sufferers, which contains the information they require.

Two readers respectively unaware, until the editor has enlightened them, that the author of Robinson Crusoe was Daniel Defoe, and the author of the Irish Melodies Thomas Moore. Another reader, a trifle denser, who requires to be told that the histories of Greece and Rome are ancient histories, and the histories of France and England modern histories.

A reader who wants to know the right hour of the day at which to visit a newly-married couple. A reader who wants a receipt for liquid blacking.

A lady reader who expresses her sentiments prettily on crinoline. Another lady reader who wants to know how to make crumpets. Another who has received presents from a gentleman to whom she is not engaged, and who wants the editor to tell her whether she is right or wrong. Two lady readers who require lovers, and wish the editor to provide them. Two timid girls, who are respectively afraid of a French invasion and dragon-flies.

A sad dog of a reader who wants the private address of a certain actress. A reader with a noble ambition who wishes to lecture, and wants to hear of an establishment at which he can buy discourses ready-made. A natty reader, who wants German polish for boots and shoes. A sore-headed reader, who is editorially advised to use soap and warm water. A virtuous reader, who writes to condemn married women for listening to compliments, and who is informed by an equally virtuous editor that his remarks are neatly expressed. A guilty (female) reader, who confides her frailties to a moral editor, and shocks him. A pale-faced reader, who asks if she shall darken her skin. Another pale- faced reader, who asks if she shall put on rouge. An undecided reader, who asks if there is any inconsistency in a dancing- mistress being a teacher at a Sunday-School. A bashful reader, who has been four years in love with a lady, and has not yet mentioned it to her. A speculative reader, who wishes to know if he can sell lemonade without a licence. An uncertain reader, who wants to be told whether he had better declare his feelings frankly and honourably at once. An indignant female reader, who reviles all the gentlemen in her neighbourhood because they don't take the ladies out. A scorbutic reader, who wants to be cured. A pimply reader in the same condition. A jilted reader, who writes to know what his best revenge may be, and who is advised by a wary editor to try indifference. A domestic reader, who wishes to be told the weight of a newly-born child. An inquisitive reader, who wants to know if the name of David's mother is mentioned in the Scriptures.

Here are ten editorial sentiments on things in general, which are pronounced at the express request of correspondents, and which are therefore likely to be of use in assisting us to form an estimate of the intellectual condition of the Unknown Public:

1. All months are lucky to marry in, when your union is hallowed by love.

2. When you have a sad trick of blushing on being introduced to a young lady, and when you want to correct the habit, summon to your aid a manly confidence.

3. If you want to write neatly, do not bestow too much ink on occasional strokes.

4. You should not shake hands with a lady on your first introduction to her.

5. You can sell ointment without a patent.

6. A widow should at once and most decidedly discourage the lightest attentions on the part of a married man.

7. A rash and thoughtless girl will scarcely make a steady thoughtful wife.

8. We do not object to a moderate quantity of crinoline.

9. A sensible and honourable man never flirts himself, and ever despises flirts of the other sex.

10. A collier will not better his condition by going to Prussia.

At the risk of being wearisome, I must once more repeat that these selections from the Answers to Correspondents, incredibly absurd as they may appear, are presented exactly as I find them. Nothing is exaggerated for the sake of a joke; nothing is invented, or misquoted, to serve the purpose of any pet theory of my own. The sample produced of the three million penny readers is left to speak for itself; to give some idea

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of the social and intellectual materials of which a portion, at least, of the Unknown Public may fairly be presumed to be composed. Having so far disposed of this first part of the matter in hand, the second part follows naturally enough of its own accord. We have all of us formed some opinion by this time on the subject of the Public itself; the next thing to do is to find out what that Public reads.

I have already said that the staple commodity of the journals appears to be formed of stories. The five specimen copies of the five separate weekly publications now before me, contain, altogether, ten serial stories, one reprint of a famous novel (to be hereafter referred to), and seven short tales, each of which begins and ends in one number. The remaining pages are filled up with miscellaneous contributions, in literature and art, drawn from every conceivable source. Pickings from Punch and Plato; wood-engravings, representing notorious people and views of famous places, which strongly suggest that the original blocks have seen better days in other periodicals; modern and ancient anecdotes; short memoirs; scraps of poetry; choice morsels of general information; household receipts, riddles, and extracts from moral writers; all appear in the most orderly manner, arranged under separate heads, and cut up neatly into short paragraphs. However, the prominent feature in each journal is the serial story, which is placed, in every case, as the first article, and which is illustrated by the only wood-engraving that appears to have been expressly cut for the purpose. To the serial story, therefore, we may fairly devote our chief attention, because it is clearly regarded as the chief attraction of these very singular publications.

Two of my specimen-copies contain, respectively, the first chapters of new stories. In the case of the other three, I found the stories in various stages of progress. The first thing that struck me, after reading the separate weekly portions of all five, was their extraordi-

nary sameness. Each portion purported to be written (and no doubt was written) by a different author, and yet all five might have been produced by the same man. Each part of each successive story, settled down in turn, as I read it, to the same dead level of the smoothest and flattest conventionality. A combination of fierce melodrama and meek domestic sentiment; short dialogues and paragraphs on the French pattern, with moral English reflections of the sort that occur on the top lines of children's copybooks; incidents and characters taken from the old exhausted mines of the circulating library, and presented as complacently and confidently as if they were original ideas; descriptions and reflections for the beginning of the number, and a "strong situation," dragged in by the neck and shoulders, for the end– formed the common literary sources from which the five authors drew their weekly supply; all collecting it by the same means; all carrying it in the same quantities; all pouring it out before the attentive public in the same way. After reading my samples of these stories, I understood why it was that the fictions of the regularly- established writers for the penny journals are never republished. There is, I honestly believe, no man, woman, or child in England, not a member of the Unknown Public, who could be got to read them. The one thing which it is possible to advance in their favour is, that there is apparently no wickedness in them. There seems to be an intense indwelling respectability in their dulness. If they lead to no intellectual result, even of the humblest kind, they may have, at least, this negative advantage, that they can do no moral harm. If it be objected that I am condemning these stories after having merely read one number of each of them, I have only to ask in return, whether anybody ever waits to go all through a novel before passing an opinion on the goodness or the badness of it? In the latter case, we throw the story down before we get through it, and that is its condemnation. There is room enough for promise, if not for performance, in any one part of any one genuine work of fiction. If I had found the smallest promise in the style, in the dialogue, in the presentation of character, in the arrangement of incident, in any of the five specimens of cheap fiction before me, each one of which extended, on the average, to ten columns of small print, I should have gone on gladly and hopefully to the next number. But I discovered nothing of the sort; and I put down my weekly sample, just as an editor, under similar circumstances, puts down a manuscript, after getting through a certain number of pages—or a reader a book.

And this sort of writing appeals to a monster audience of at least three millions ! The former proprietor of one of these penny journals commissioned a thoroughly competent person to translate The Count of Monte Christo, for his periodical. He knew that there was hardly a language in the civilised world into which that consummate specimen of the rare and difficult art of story-telling had not been translated. In France, in England, in America, in Russia, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, Alexandre Dumas had held hundreds of thousands of readers breathless. The proprietor of the penny journal naturally thought that he could do as much with the Unknown Public. Strange to say, the result of this apparently certain experiment was a failure. The circulation of the journal in question, seriously decreased from the time when the first of living story-tellers became a contributor to it! The same experiment was tried with the Mysteries of Paris and the Wandering Jew, only to produce the same

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result. Another penny journal gave Dumas a commission to write a new story, expressly for translation in its columns. The speculation was tried, and once again the inscrutable Unknown Public held back the hand of welcome from the spoilt child of a whole world of novel-readers.

How is this to be accounted for ? Does a rigid moral sense permeate the Unknown Public from one end of it to the other, and did the productions of the French novelists shock that sense from the very outset? The page containing the Answers to Correspondents would, be enough in itself to dispose of this theory. But there are other and better means of arriving at the truth, which render any further reference to the correspondents' page unnecessary. Some time since, an eminent novelist (the only living English author, with a literary position, who has, as yet, written for the Unknown Public) produced his new novel in a penny journal. No shadow of a moral objection has ever been urged by any readers against the works published by the author of It Is Never Too Late To Mend; but even he, unless I have been greatly misinformed, failed to make the impression that had been anticipated on the impenetrable Three Millions. The great success of his novel was not obtained in its original serial form, but in its republished form, when it appealed from the Unknown to the Known Public. Clearly, the moral obstacle was not the obstacle which militated against the success of Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue.

What was it, then ? Plainly this, as I believe. The Unknown Public is, in a literary sense, hardly beginning, as yet, to learn to read. The members of it are evidently, in the mass, from no fault of theirs, still ignorant of almost everything which is generally known and understood among readers whom circumstances have placed, socially and intellectually, in the rank above them. The mere references in Monte Christo, The Mysteries of Paris, and White Lies (the scene of this last English fiction having been laid on French ground), to foreign names, titles, manners and customs, puzzled the Unknown Public on the threshold. Look back at the answers to correspondents, and then say, out of fifty subscribers to a penny journal, how many are likely to know, for example, that Mademoiselle means Miss? Besides the difficulty in appealing to the penny audience caused at the beginning by such simple obstacles as this, there was the great additional difficulty, in the case of all three of the fictions just mentioned, of accustoming untried readers to the delicacies and subtleties of literary art. An immense public has been discovered: the next thing to be done is, in a literary sense, to teach that public how to read.

An attempt, to the credit of one of the penny journals, is already being made. I have mentioned, in one place, a reprint of a novel, and later, a remarkable exception to the drearily common-place character of the rest of the stories. In both these cases I refer to one and the same fiction– to the Kenilworth of Sir Walter Scott, which is now being reprinted as a serial attraction in a penny journal. Here is the great master of modern fiction appealing, at this time of day, to a new public, and (amazing anomaly!) marching in company with writers who have the rudiments of their craft still to learn! To my mind, one result seems certain. If Kenilworth be appreciated by the Unknown Public, then the very best men among living English writers will one of these days be called on, as a matter of necessity, to make their appearance in the pages of the penny journals.

Meanwhile, it is perhaps hardly too much to say, that the future of English fiction may rest with this Unknown Public, which is now waiting to be taught the difference between a good book and a bad. It is probably a question of time only. The largest audience for periodical literature, in this age of periodicals, must obey the universal law of progress, and must, sooner or later, learn to discriminate. When that period comes, the readers who rank by millions, will be the readers who give the widest reputations, who return the richest rewards, and who will, therefore, command the service of the best writers of their time. A great, an unparalleled prospect awaits, perhaps, the coming generation of English novelists. To the penny journals

of the present time belongs the credit of having discovered a new public. When that public shall discover its need of a great writer, the great writer will have such an audience as has never yet been known.

Week 2. Gothic Play: Parody and Satire

Primary Reading: Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1803/1818)

Secondary Reading: one or more of the following articles:

- Kearful, Frank J. "Satire and the Form of the Novel: The Problem of Aesthetic Unity in Northanger Abbey." *ELH,* vol. 32, no. 4, 1965, pp. 511–527. www.jstor.org/stable/2872256
- Wallace, Tara Ghoshal. "'Northanger Abbey' and the Limits of Parody." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1988, pp. 262–273. , www.jstor.org/stable/29532579.
- Gallon, D. N. "Comedy in 'Northanger Abbey.'" *The Modern Language Review,* vol. 63, no. 4, 1968, pp. 802–809. www.jstor.org/stable/3723737

For information about Austen's life and works see her entry in the ODNB.

Guidance for Reading

1. Keep track of what the novel says about "novel reading" and specific novels, the uses and functions of literature, and the narrator's role in this. Building on your reading in week 1, what does this novel add to the debate about "appropriate" reading, the readers of Gothic, and its critics?

2. How do we know what is parody or satire in *Northanger*? And are we able to enjoy/"get" the parody if we have not read the novels that are the subject of its satire?

3. What is parody/satire anyway? What do literary theorists say about its function? Any thoughts on whether/how "Gothic" changes that function?

Week 3. The Anatomy of Terror

Primary Reading: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)

Secondary Reading: Henningsen, Kadin. "“You deciphered me and now I am plain to read”: How the Body Is a Book." *Library Trends*, vol. 64 no. 4, 2016, pp. 741-755. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0018

Guidance for Reading

Maybe you have read *Frankenstein* before, and discussed a range of different aspects, or focused on a couple of specific points. Maybe this is new to you. Either way, as you read keep a note of **everything,** including your suspicions that there is a bit of a bromance between Waldon and Victor (or is it unrequited love?); how Victor has mommy issues; the creature has daddy issues; how “my goodness, that’s a lot of landscape description”; how this was nothing like you thought; how perhaps this is a very biographical tale about Shelley’s miscarriages and/or the death of her own mother in childbirth; the philosophical debate about good and evil; the disgraceful treatment of Justine and the politics of the proletariat, etc (see this long, but not exhaustive list for some of the various approaches http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Articles/index.html)

1. In particular, however, this class will be about **science**, and more specifically **anatomy. Read this short piece for a bit of context** (and more if you like). So, as you are reading, please make note of:
   - Any references Victor makes to the **physical appearances of characters and how their character is reflected in their physicality.**
   - Pay particularly close attention to chapter’s 4 and 5, including the sort of books he has been reading.
   - Descriptions of death and dead bodies.

2. Again, think about what makes this novel “Gothic”, both **textually** and **contextually.** Any referenced evidence you have for those thoughts should be noted

3. We will also be thinking, more conceptually, about **the body as book.** Have a read of Henningsen’s article and how we might read *Frankenstein* in light of this. You might also find **this article** useful (but it’s not compulsory). The class discussion will build on this further.